

YELLOW LIGHT



JACK GALMITZ

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Yellow Light – Jack Galmitz

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Foreword

Yellow Light: (idiomatic) *Limited approval or permission to proceed*; a situation faced by millions of mentally ill people every day. Everything seems like a battle. Getting a job—filling in those gaps on your CV and if you are lucky enough to get one, holding it down. Getting benefits—you are not quite ill enough, your illness is invisible. Struggling with social situations—being ostracized, called 'anti-social' (a totally misinterpreted phrase). Maintaining relationships—loved ones misunderstanding your mood swings or short temper or *bizarre* behaviour.

But *limited approval or permission to proceed* has its advantages: lower expectations—we are expected to fail. And the mentally *ill* are also very good at creative thinking—looking at the world in a way that the mentally *healthy* may find difficult. *Yellow Light* carves its way through Galmitz's own mental illness. It is honest, brave and original, and speaks for everyone who is struggling with mental illness. It says: *we are not alone, and after the darkness, somewhere in place, somewhere in time, there will be light.*

—Brendan Slater, 2013

for the mentally ill

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The moon climbs the sky cross country skiing

A brick wall raining

A glass of water sipping

A river running beside it

Birds fly a poem's line

A river and a tree knotted

the mirror redounds the sun then

the window blurred rain in the garden

looking at myself in a store window a mannequin

gravel tumbling down a chute opening notes

sand waves

a train leaves the station a max loop shifter automatic improvisation

a new moon a marriage ring

crowds on the street performance art

walked by the dog

seeing rabbits going to work

under the moon we were married by the moon's rules

on the staff the notes are birds

grandfather walked through the tides

crumpled paper music

the minah bird squawks “same to you, pal”

through the door men seen dying in fictions

descendent of a star that co-existing

under the pillow lute strings slit by the minstrel

a body of light making room for a pillar of steel

the son of man returns ornamental pears

watching butterflies the two sides of my brain

from my skull antlers grow in the snow

as the window opens light

the piano plays pink streaks of rain

male parts and female parts am I a flower

Roe deer hopping snow and naked trees

The guitar laments the plucking fingers

This poem is a rubber garden trowel

Words implode in the conversation

A man and woman magnetize evening

The cat's dream is vermillion

The trees study Redon, yearly

When a fifth ace turns up talk turns to man

A boy a stream at its source

Inside “my mind”

A great white the bowels of night

Light blue square skylight she touches me unawares

Thunder words collide with world

The crowd overturns cars then returns home

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Like Lichen

Living as a painting requires multiple images of your body repeated (exactly) as if you were lying on a copier or flattened so that it is surfaces of color or laid one on top of another in randomness, non-sequentially, like pagodas in a morgue you must be willing to not talk, not cough, although your mouth may be as open as a sea bass striking a lure the lighting must be poor to enable ambiguity to play its part say like the bluish-gray of a television on an off-white wall, smoky, trailing off to the skylight or floor you may have to submit to strips of your skin cut off and placed in grids and your eyes have circles painted in iodine red or black of caviar you may stand against a wall extremities muscles tightly tucked for classical affect you may have to lose arms for lobster claws or your head replaced by a fish's fins or more you may be in a corner of a floor in miniature representing the entropy of man in the new world order it's unsure or you may be cut up in approximation of boxes, rectangles, overlapping the blood most important of all it may have to be repainted depending on the contours your organs may be redesigned as to placement, feet separated standing on your heart or if it is already black from smoking it may be centered with arteries and veins stretched like tentacles to the edge and beyond imagine you're in a frame, on your stomach, a square cut out to expose your entrails, plastic sheet of 2" diameter covering exposing it like a peek within a construction site and its progress so you'll either be one of a kind which is rare or more likely a multitude if you have tattoos they'll be used accordingly or a realist might just prop you in chair by a standing lamp with a magazine in your hands in a room for boarders a dog at your feet on a carpet asleep give it some thought as there

are other things to practice than being art art is incommensurable at best, decorative at worse, shocking in obscure references think of the body as crusty lichen grown on a cement and brick wall mark Rothko.

The Strings to Heaven

The strings to heaven were severed with scissors of water. All fell down. We went shopping and bought. Nicolas Joseph Cugnot invented a steam powered automobile in 1769 leading to bank robbery getaways, the delivery of milk bottles, and steaming hours stuck on stagnant highways—sometimes to the beach and waves. Men and women stopped wearing head coverings as prescribed in Corinthians and the wavy look became fashionable. Louis-Victor de Broglie claimed that all matter, not just light, had a wave-like nature. Some people cared; most did not give a fuck. We sat on the knoll by the lake and watched wind ripples all day. Less and less of the body was covered. We were not ashamed. Edison invented the light bulb and soon night was day and stars were plucked down and placed on filthy, cobblestoned streets. Trains were given overhead catenary systems and people traveled from Hoboken to Gladstone looking out at cows and horses, tractors, threshers and night gathering from clouds of gray. Then back again. Elevators climbed. The iron frame raised. Cities were mountain ranges; apartments caves. We wore less and were not ashamed. Steamships traveled oceans, rivers, lakes, dropped goods at ports and didn't stay. We looked around and saw ourselves. What we thought we printed and it stayed. We dissected. Saw how we were made. Diseases were catalogued. We looked around and saw ourselves and waved. We made steel and built tanks and machine guns, hand-grenades, airplanes and bombs. We were less than naked, millions were merely body parts. We played the harp. We couldn't reattach the strings to the sky. (Though some thought that they had.) Looking down from the observatory of the Empire State Building are lines of yellow cabs

and cars and corners, grids, and dark stops. You can see Piet Mondrian in his studio purified of things painting Broadway Boogie Woogie. You can anticipate Shinya Tsukamoto. I took an ocean liner and stood on the deck and though no one was waiting for me at the dock, like everyone else I waved and waved until my arm dropped.

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Yellow Light is a stunning collection of short verse tackling the subject of mental illness. Galmitz cleverly leads the reader down a seldom-trodden path, and like a tour guide of the mind, points out the landmarks of a troubled psyche. His use of rich imagery draws the reader in but in no way disturbs or upsets, he simply tells us a story, one that is often overlooked, forgotten and avoided.

Like all the titles published by Yet To Be Named Free Press, ***Yellow Light*** is progressive and original, laying the foundations for the new wave of short verse which is emerging in the 21st century. An excellent addition to anyone's library, a must for readers and writers who want to make the change from nature postcards to reality.



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**poetry/
short verse**